

United States Senate

June 19, 2007

The Honorable Condoleezza Rice
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Rice:

I write to express the frustration many of my constituents have experienced as a result of unanticipated delays in the passport application process. In several instances, my office has been contacted by individuals who have applied for passports well within the recommended time frame, yet they have been unable to fulfill their travel plans as a result of these unacceptable holdups. These delays have caused serious financial loss for many of my constituents.

It is my understanding that this problem is largely the result of unprecedented demand resulting from the implementation of the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI)—an important program for securing our homeland, based largely on the recommendations of the 9/11 Commission. Yet, despite the gradual nature of its implementation, which was first announced more than two years ago, the government agencies responsible for processing these documents have failed to prepare for the predictable increase in applications.

Your announcement several days ago that the Department would suspend the passport requirement for Americans returning from Canada, Mexico, Bermuda, and the Caribbean seems like a good first step in dealing with the unprecedented volume of applications. While this action will help those traveling to WHTI countries, I encourage you to ensure that adequate resources are directed toward improving the passport system for those traveling to other countries as well.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



MITCH McCONNELL
UNITED STATES SENATOR